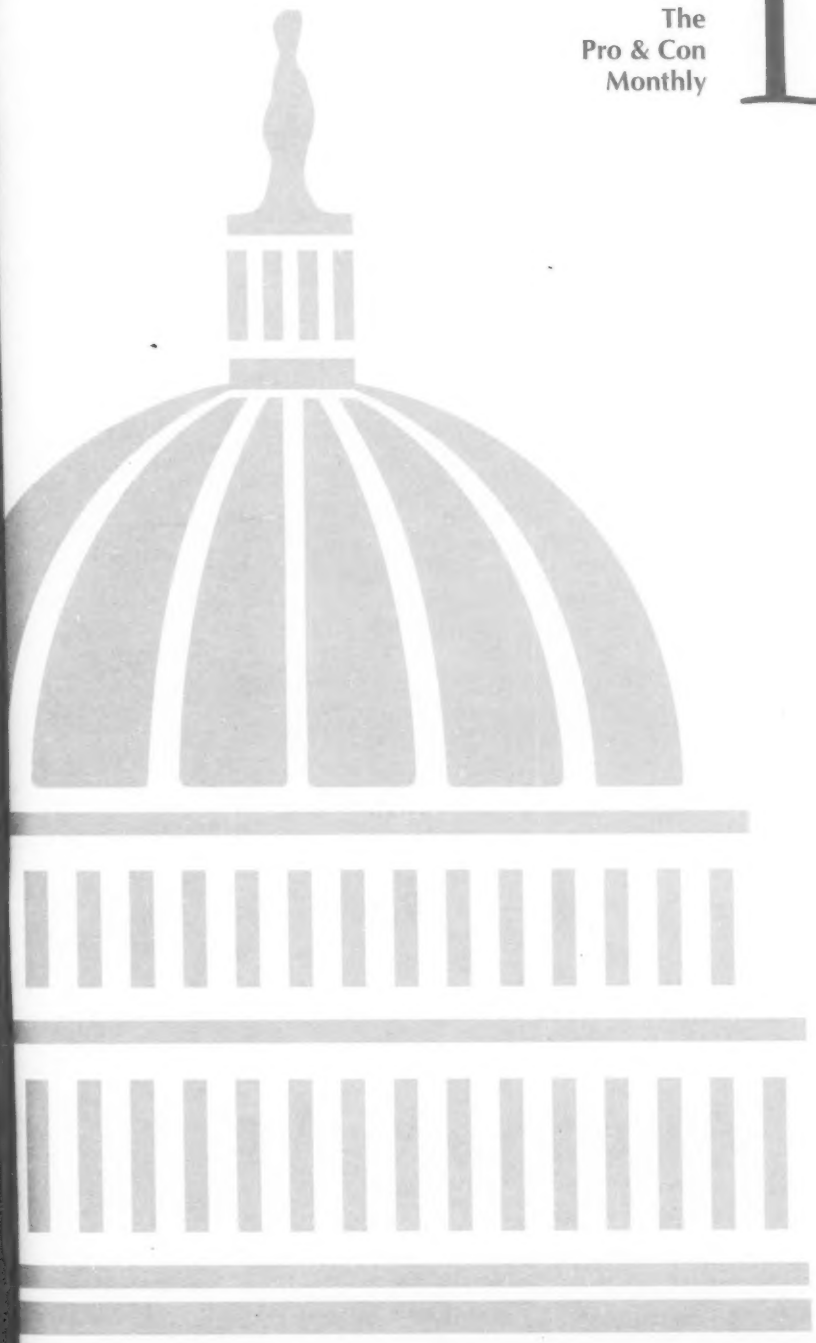
DECEMBER 1997
Annual Cumulative Index

Congressional Digest

The Pro & Con Monthly



1997 Annual Cumulative Index

Pro & Con

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Congressional Digest
The Pro & Con Monthly®

Since 1921, and for three generations, *Congressional Digest, The Pro & Con Monthly*® has continued the tradition set by its founder, Alice Gram Robinson, of educating her fellow citizens by providing an "impartial view of controversial issues in Congress."

Alice Robinson prided herself on the magazine's unbiased reporting and presentation of balanced arguments in a Pro & Con® section. A founder of the Women's National Press Club in Washington, D.C., in 1919, Robinson wrote in her memoirs that the *Digest* only used "signed statements" and took no editorial positions. When Members of Congress offered to buy the *Digest* in the early 1920s, she refused, insisting that the backing of Congress would destroy the magazine's value since there would always be a majority viewpoint that would "immediately make the publication's impartiality suspect."

An active participant in the women's suffrage movement, Robinson learned early on the power of standing up for one's beliefs. She was arrested in 1918 for protesting, with other female activists, the seven-month sentence imposed on Alice Paul, the movement's leader. Paul had been convicted of "obstructing traffic" while picketing for the right to vote. In prison, Robinson and other activists refused to eat or perform prison labor in protest against the Wilson Administration's refusal to recognize their status as political prisoners.

While in prison, Robinson drew the attention of none other than the President. "As the youngest hunger-striker," she wrote, "I was found to be subject to anemia, and my physical decline soon brought the White House physician himself to my bedside. He had been smuggled in to avoid the reporters."

Soon afterward, "because of [the physician's] report of my possible demise . . . or the fact that Thanksgiving, the Nation's great feast day, lay just ahead, President Wilson apparently could not face the disgrace of having American women languishing in jail — women who were asking for democracy at home while he was making the world 'safe for democracy' abroad."

The President issued a full pardon, and on the day before Thanksgiving, the picketers were released. They were driven "with great fanfare and a caravan of limousines, including one from the White House laden with fruit and flowers," back to the Dolley Madison mansion where their protest had begun. By June 1919, Congress had approved the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, granting women the right to vote, and in 1920, it became law.

By then, Robinson had come to believe strongly in the importance of informing the new woman voter, writing that "with so much propaganda . . . the women were going to be new victims, and with little defense." The best way to prevent the newly franchised voter from being intimidated or influenced by the actions and rhetoric of Congress, she decided, was through a publication that presented, in facing columns, opposing views on controversial national questions. That way, if a woman "became enthused about some new Federal proposal, she could consult the opposite page and soon find out its shortcomings."

In addition to informing new voters, *Congressional Digest* proved beneficial to educational institutions. With Franklin Roosevelt's election and the torrent of new legislative initiatives during the New Deal, "the need increased for more information about the U.S. Congress," Robinson wrote. The publication soon became an important resource in libraries, high schools, and universities.

Alice Robinson's husband, Norborne T.N. Robinson, Jr. — a professional writer and newspaper reporter, and a founder of the National Press Club in 1908 — helped her in many ways. His unwavering support of his wife's endeavors eased her struggle in the "man's world" of reporting.

Later, their son stepped into the role of publisher and met the challenge of putting out a legislative publication in another era of controversial political issues — all the while, maintaining the magazine's impartial focus.

Today, *Congressional Digest* continues under the direction of its Publisher, Page Robinson Thomas (the granddaughter of Alice Gram Robinson), and her husband, R. Griffith Thomas, President, who oversees the daily operations.

In recent years, the company has modernized its products to adapt to changing technology, including the addition of a website (www.congressionaldigest.com) in 1997. As always, the *Digest* remains true to its original mission, recording — for current and future readers — the important issues of our times.

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